

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "Dame Durdan," "My Lord Conceit,"
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER IX. IN THE STORM.

A MOMENT later the storm descended in all its fury. The wind no longer moaned, but howled like a legion of demons. The trees around the little cottage writhed and tossed, and flung out threatening arms at one another, and shook their beautiful leaves down on the sodden earth as if in very impotence of senseless fury.

The rain streamed down in one terrific torrent, amidst which the lightning flashed and played like vivid flame. It was a terrible scene; and Gretchen, hurriedly closing her window, sat there trembling and agast.

"Oh! why would he not wait?" she asked herself again and again, picturing that lonely figure on the dark, unsheltered road, amid the warring elements. "And who could have told him to come here? How cruel! how shameful! How angry Neale will be!"

The magic of that name for a moment swayed her with the old resistless mastery. Almost unconsciously she sank down on her knees beside the bed, and buried her face in the soft white coverlid.

"Oh, love! why are you not here?" her heart cried out as the tempest rioted without. "Can't you feel I want you?"

But the solitude was unanswering, the quiet of the room was undisturbed by step or shadow; though, indeed, it seemed to the girl that the passionate call and crave of her heart must surely bridge the abyss of space and time, and echo at the doors of

that other heart to which she had appealed.

She had been alone a long time now—long, at least, to one who measured time by the absence of the only being who made time endurable.

It seemed as if months, instead of weeks, had passed since she had come to this little quiet nook, buried from sight and sound of the outer world. The days had been spent among books, or in rambles through the lonely lanes and quiet meadows. Her only comfort had been Neale's letters, and they were neither so frequent nor so long as she could have desired.

Till to-night, when Adrian Lyle's presence had broken in on her solitude, she had been as lonely and as undisturbed as the Sleeping Princess of immortal fame. Each morning, when she rose, she told herself, "He will be here to-day!" and each evening, as her eyes closed in slumbers that were too light and too dream-filled for rest, she would murmur, "To-morrow; surely he will come to-morrow."

She knelt there now for long, listening half in terror to the raging storm, yet loyally seeing in it both fair and good excuse for that deferred presence which, to her, embodied all that was loved and valued in life.

The storm at last began to abate its violence. The rain fell in slow, plashing drops; the wind died away with long, low moans; the thunder no longer crashed and rolled through the black vaults above; and the lightning only played fitfully and irregularly along the brightening line that already spoke of dawn.

Gretchen rose to her feet at last; she felt that sleep was impossible. She went to her window and drew up the blind, and looked out on the devastated garden. As

she looked, a faint pale gleam lit up the eastern sky, and slowly spread itself along the heavy banks of clouds.

Her eyes turned to that gleam, joyful that it meant another dawn, yet heavy with the shadows of memory such as daylight always brought her.

She remembered that sunrise in Venice—all its wonder and its glory, and the rapture of that other presence that had watched it by her side.

And one other morning she thought of now—when they had passed through Vienna on their return journey. They were to leave by the early train, and she had risen at six o'clock to have a peep at the wonderful city, which as yet was unknown and marvellous as a child's dream to her vivid fancy.

How it all came back: the sumptuous room; the bare polished floor over which she had moved with rosy, naked feet! She seemed to see herself creeping, eager and curious as a child, to the lace-enshrouded window and opening it, and looking out on the street below that was all damp and cool from the passage of the water-carts. She could recall the very look of the opposite houses, with their jealously-closed shutters; even the café, where a waiter was lazily opening doors and windows, and yawning vigorously over the performance. A cloud of pigeons were fluttering amidst eaves and nooks formed by balconies and arches. It seemed to her she heard their soft coos, the movement of their rustling wings; and all the golden light and glory of the day swept once more over her senses and made her heart thrill at the remembrance of her own great happiness.

Then, the story of her life had just begun. Now, it had gathered pages instead of lines; it held pictures, scenes, incidents, she never wearied of recalling.

As she stood by the open window the scents of the jasmine and roses touched her senses with a subtle pain, for which she could not account. The dark, dreary eyes grew wistful; a little shiver shook her slender frame. Then, quite suddenly, she saw the light spread glowing and glorious over all the dim grey sky. She heard a flutter of wings, a chirp of waking birds, and half-unconsciously her glance fell earthwards, and in its wanderings rested with a sudden startled wonder on the fallen trunk of a huge tree, which only the night before had towered in lofty grandeur among its compeers.

There it lay now—broken, bruised; its

leaves soddened; its boughs cracked and bare; a melancholy and forlorn thing in the brightness and glory of the awakening day. Pityingly and regretfully the girl's eyes rested on it, and as their scrutiny grew more intense it seemed to her that something else lay there amidst that entangling mass of leaves and broken boughs. Involuntarily she leant forwards, shading her eyes from the now vivid glow of sunlight, painfully conscious of a terrible fear, which robbed her cheeks of colour and filled her heart with an intense and inexplicable dread.

A moment more and she had left the window, and thrust her feet into slippers, and flung a warm and heavy cloak over her white draperies.

Then swift as thought she flew down the stairs, and opened the door, and so crossing with a lapwing's speed the intervening space, found herself leaning, terrified and helpless, over the prostrate figure of a man.

As the horror slowly passed from her eyes, she saw—who—it was. She remembered, with piteous and bewildered self-reproach, the crash that had mingled with the thunder. The huge tree had struck him as his hand was on the gate. She saw the dreadful gash on the uncovered head, the blood that lay in a pool beneath it.

So still, so grey, looked the face upturned there with closed eyes, in the light and glory of the June dawn, that she fancied he was dead, and in her terror screamed aloud the word, and rushed back to the house to awake the sleeping servants.

The gardener was the first who heard her cry, and followed her with all speed to the spot. It was a task of no small difficulty to clear away the heavy boughs and branches from round and about that helpless figure. Then she tried to lift it, but in vain.

"He be powerful heavy," he said, scratching his head and looking helplessly at Gretchen. "Maybe I'd better go for help?"

"Yes, go, go!" cried the girl frantically, as she tried to stanch the terrible wound, and looked with ever-growing dread at the pallid, hueless face. "And send some one to the village for the doctor. He is not dead. I can feel his heart beat. Only, for Heaven's sake, make haste."

She supported the head against her knees, scarce knowing how she did it. It was so terrible, to think that all those

hours he had been lying here so close to her, bleeding slowly to death, and she—unconscious of it all!

She raised one hand, but it dropped heavily back, yet she saw the pale lips suddenly quiver, and the eyes unclosed. One fleeting glance, betraying no consciousness, giving no recognition, and again Adrian Lyle relapsed into insensibility.

She wetted his cold brow with the rain-water, she chafed his hands in her own small trembling palms, but he gave no sign of awaking.

Never had sound of human steps seemed so welcome to the girl as when she caught the echo of old Job's, and those of the labourer he had brought with him from a neighbouring field. Between them they managed to lift the unconscious man, and bore him into the cottage, and laid him down on the bed which Gretchen had ordered the woman to prepare.

She made old Job and his wife remove the wet and soaking clothes, and wrap the cold and pulseless limbs in hot blankets. She herself prepared hot wine, and tried to pour it through the clenched teeth; but it was useless.

It seemed long, long hours before the village doctor came. Fortunately he was a clever and also a reticent man. He asked but few questions; the case explained itself. Concussion of the brain—in all probability to be followed by rheumatic fever, after those long hours of exposure and loss of blood.

"It will be very serious," he said, glancing from the unconscious man to the lovely terror-stricken face of the watcher. "I had better send you a nurse."

"No—please do not," pleaded Gretchen in her imperfect English. "I am strong and young. I can do all that is necessary, with the assistance of my servant."

"As you please, madam," said the doctor gruffly. "Only, when matters grow critical, you will find it is impossible. Is the gentleman a friend of yours?"

"Yes," said the girl. "At least, I met him abroad some months ago—that is all."

The doctor looked sharply at her. There was some mystery, he knew, about the lady at The Laurels. He saw how lovely she was, and how young. He noted the circlet on her slender finger, and thought he must be a strange husband who would care to leave so young and fair a wife to the solitude which he knew had been her portion.

"Perhaps," he said doubtfully, "you

had better communicate with the gentleman's friends. Do you know his address?"

"No," said Gretchen. "I have no idea of it."

"You had better search his pockets then. There may be a letter or card in them to give the information. At present I can do nothing more. I will return again this evening."

He went away, leaving Gretchen more helpless and miserable than she had ever felt.

The mystery of Adrian Lyle's presence here was inexplicable. She knew that no one save Neale could give her his address; and Mr. Lyle had said he had been told she had sent for him—that she was ill almost to death.

The search in his pockets produced nothing, save a little worn pocket Testament, which never left his possession. His bag, which old Job had discovered close by the gate, contained only a change of linen. There was not a scrap of paper even, to give any clue to where he had come from, or how he had discovered Gretchen's retreat.

As the hours wore on he became delirious, and the girl grew really alarmed.

"I must write to Neale," she thought, "and tell him to come at once."

She left the sick room, and went downstairs and into the little parlour that was all embowered in roses and bright with sunshine. Yet something about it struck cold and chill on her senses, and she felt a vague terror of its intense loneliness.

She sat down at the little table, and drew paper and pens slowly before her. To write to Neale was always a labour of love. Why, then, this sudden and unsurmountable dread?

Hurriedly she began to trace the first few words. English seemed easier to her to write than to speak. She had penned but some half-dozen lines, when the sound of a step without, made her lift her head and look eagerly out of the window.

It was the postman she had heard. He was close to her, and with a sudden impulse she leant out of the window and asked for the letters. He handed her one. A lovely flush of colour dyed her cheeks; her eyes glowed like stars. It was from him—her love—her idol—her beloved. With a sudden rush of pulses, with a heart of flame, she tore the cover asunder and seized upon the words with devouring eyes.

One moment—two—three—then the

colour faded to deadly white, the leaping pulses beat with heavy, stony throbs.

"Gone away!" the pale lips murmured. "Gone away! . . . Not one farewell look, or word, or kiss. Gone—away!"

Her eyes in all their agony of appeal met only those cold written words; saw only as an insult to her passionate love the flimsy slip of paper enclosed. Then, with one exceeding bitter cry, she threw herself face downwards on the floor, the letter crushed in her hand; her whole frame racked by sobs that threatened to suffocate her as they tore her breast and broke from her quivering lips.

He had gone! He had left her! That was all she could remember. Not a thousand explanations or excuses could soften the cruelty of those words. After these lonely weeks—these long, dull days, when her every thought had been of him, he could calmly depart for some far-off land without sparing her one hour to say farewell. All her watching, her prayers, her longings, seemed flung back on her now as things useless and undesired. She would have walked barefoot a hundred miles to see him, to look once more on the beloved face, to touch the fond lips that had sworn such eternal love to hers; and he—he had not made one effort, nor attempted one sacrifice in order to give her such consolation. All her wealth of love, her patience, her tenderness, had not been powerful enough to draw him to her side, while she—!

Alas! for the wide, wide difference between a man's love and a woman's. What would she not have done, suffered, sacrificed, only to purchase one hour of his presence?

After a time the first passion of her grief spent itself. She rose and shook back her disordered hair, and stumbled with blind, unsteady steps, back to the table where her letter lay. She looked at it as a stranger might have looked. It seemed as if long, long years had passed since, glad and hopeful, she had penned those lines. No need to send them—now.

She took the paper and tore it slowly into shreds. The halo of that sham hallucination with which she had crowned a man's selfish passion faded with each wasted word.

She sickened with pain as she did it, remembering the hopes that were ended, the dreams that were dead. As the last fragment fluttered to her feet she closed the writing-case with resolute hand, then

moved slowly away. At the door she turned and looked back, seeming to see the ghost of her girlish self, quivering with love, and life, and hope; the brightest, loveliest thing that that old parlour had ever seen.

So laggard a step, so wan and sad a face, had never belonged to that Gretchen of an hour ago. The thought of that old self and the pity she felt for it, and the utter impossibility that it could ever, ever again come back to her, shook her once more with a tempest of piteous grief.

"Oh—he might have come," she cried, and the tears rushed down her pale cheeks. "He would have come had he loved me as I love him."

The tones of her voice had lost all their soft, rich music. It was as if her very life had been withdrawn from all that nourished and supported it. She was a woman now, a woman who had learnt the meanings of suffering at one stroke. A woman—alas! alas! the pity of it—never more to be a girl glad and gay of heart for very youth and delight of living, and of love, and all youth's passionate blind faith in what was—loved!

That night the doctor spoke seriously of his patient's condition to Gretchen. His keen eye detected that some sorrow or trouble had fallen upon the girl's young life, and he could not but compassionate her present situation.

"My husband has gone abroad to join his regiment," she said, and said it coldly and calmly as one who had been used to such partings. "But I am sure it would not be for him to wish his friend removed from here if his condition be so critical as you say. He must remain till he gets stronger. I—and my old servant will do our best for him."

"As you please, madam," said the old man gravely. "But I must tell you it will be a long case."

"That," she said with a little odd gesture, "does make no difference. It will but help me to pass the time."

CHAPTER X.

SOME MORE CAPRICES.

"A TELEGRAM from Neale," said Sir Roy at breakfast, the morning after Adrian Lyle's departure. "Good heavens—off directly to Madras—regiment under orders!"

He threw down the little pink paper, and looked at his daughter in consternation.

Her face expressed more relief than surprise.

"It is sudden," she said. "Perhaps you had better go up to town to see him."

"I will," said Sir Roy, who seemed overwhelmed at the news. "Poor boy, how unfortunate!"

"Oh no," said Alexis coolly. "It is as well he should undergo the 'baptism of fire.' He is just one of those happy-go-lucky persons who never come to grief."

But Sir Roy, who saw danger threatening his pet scheme, was by no means comfortable.

"Won't you come up, too?" he urged, "The poor boy can't get away to see us—we ought surely to go to him."

"I hate parting scenes," said Alexis coldly. "I should be expected to weep, and you know I never do—in public. Perhaps there would be others going to see the troops off. Melodramatic display, crying women, squalling babies, untuneful bands, noise, turmoil, emotion, all joined with the smell of tar and oil, and dirty ropes, and heaving water—all things I detest. No, I think I will not go. You can make him my farewells. We are neither of us impassioned lovers, as you know."

Sir Roy was silent. He looked and felt disturbed, but he knew better than to waste arguments or persuasions on his daughter. Perhaps if he acquiesced with her, she would go. It was more than probable.

However, Alexis had no intention of going. She ordered and arranged everything for her father, and was almost affectionate to him in her farewells; but she in no way changed her first decision, and Sir Roy took the early train to London in solitary glory.

Having seen him off, Alexis went to her room, and had herself dressed for church in an exquisite costume of pale grey.

She sent Lady Breresford a message desiring to know if she cared to accompany her, and was conscious of a feeling of relief when she received an answer in the negative.

The bells had just ceased ringing as she drove up to the door, and many eyes turned towards that beautiful figure sweeping in indolent grace up the aisle to the Abbey pew. Though her head was bent down in unaccustomed humility, yet Alexis Kenyon caught the flutter of white robes, and was dimly and almost angrily conscious of an answering tremor in her own

heart. The knowledge of anything so unusual and so uncalled-for, roused all her pride and coldness, nor did she attempt to lift her eyes to where the figures of the Rector and Curate were standing. But when a strange voice fell on her ear, she could not help one quick glance at the reading desk. The Rector was in his accustomed place, but a stranger stood where Adrian Lyle was wont to stand, and a feeling of disappointment at an unverified expectation crept into Alexis Kenyon's heart as she noted the fact.

It was swept away immediately by a tide of angry shame. Why should she care who conducted the service? Why should it matter to her if that grave face, and that brow of power and thought, were not at hand, for her scornful eyes to criticise?

All the same, the service seemed to her a more meaningless form even than usual. The Rector's oily voice and safely-grounded platitudes irritated her nerves to an almost unbearable degree.

Despite these facts, however, she waited in her carriage till the reverend gentleman came out from the vestry, unsurprised and stole-less, his ordinary, comfortable-looking self, and graciously invited him to lunch at the Abbey.

The invitation was immediately accepted, despite the fact that the strange Curate, who had been hurriedly telegraphed for, would have to take his cold lamb and claret in the solitude of the Rectory parlour, and under the supervision of the Rectory housekeeper.

Alexis Kenyon leant haughtily and negligently back on her luxurious cushions, listening to the old man's unctuous talk, and wondering whether he would see fit to mention the cause of Adrian Lyle's absence.

He did at last, in the form of a complaint, and as a disturbance to his own comfort and convenience.

Alexis listened with her coldest air; but in her heart she wondered from whom the mysterious summons had come. He had told her once that he had no relatives, and very few friends. Yet something very urgent must have caused him to risk offending the Rector, and neglecting his duties.

The growing consciousness that his absence disturbed her, that the cause of it had even been the reason of her present boredom, was sufficient reason for Alexis Kenyon to be all that was most capricious,

languid, and disdainful during the luncheon, and indeed for the rest of the afternoon.

She tried Lady Breresford's temper so severely that that usually amiable dowager retreated as speedily as possible to the solitude of her own pretty boudoir. The men seemed amused, and Fay laughed and put it down to the effects of church-going; but Alexis herself knew well enough the reason, though she disdained to acknowledge it.

They had tea on the lawn about five o'clock, after which the Rector took a prosy farewell, and was driven back to the comfortable Rectory and the neglected Curate.

Alexis went within and wrote two letters: one was to Neale, bidding him a cool, and not very regretful farewell; the other, to a lady in London, who had told her she was in want of a governess.

"I have heard of an excellent one," wrote the girl. "Well educated, refined, capable in every way. She is very poor. I will be her reference if you will take her at once, as I know she is in very straitened circumstances. It is not often I ask a favour of anyone; but I do ask this of you, and only beg you to keep my name secret in the matter."

The letters sealed and addressed, she felt more at ease. She did not know the person on whose behalf she had interested herself. In all probability, she would never even see her; but all the same she wished to help her to the independence she sought, just because no one would believe she had ever given the matter another thought.

"He said I had made quite a fine art of selfishness," she told herself, standing there by her window in the bright June sunset, and gazing down the long winding avenue. "No doubt he is right."

While she stood there the bells began to ring for evening service. She listened to them with a vague impatience and restlessness. How was it that she, to whom all religion had been indifferent, all forms a weariness, should hear those bells as one who hears a tale of pathos and regret; should see old dreams arise, old fancies dying, all things of youth, and hope, and tenderness come back in mournful resurrection? How was it, too, that as their cadence rose and fell on the evening air, they brought the low, rich tones of a remembered voice to her ears—a voice that had dared to tell her the truth of herself, her follies, her arrogance, her selfishness; yet told it

in such guise that she recognised its truth with more of shame than anger; that she acknowledged its rebuke with more of meekness than of pride?

There must have been something in Alexis Kenyon's nature not yet utterly obscured by the languor and indolence of fashionable life, and the vanities and adulation of the world she had ruled—something not altogether so cold, so cruel, so purposeless as she would have had men believe—and that something it was that Adrian Lyle's words had stirred from its long and indolent repose, and brought face to face with her once affected incredulity, till she saw herself as he saw her, and felt bitterly ashamed of the picture.

Slowly, sweetly, the bells rang on, over woods and meadows golden in the sunlight; over quiet homes and pastures, and all the simple, homely things of country life. And the mistress of all these wide domains stood there in the rosy glow of the evening light, gazing on it all with eyes too weary for tears, with a heart too bitter for peace; and ever and always before her, and looking back to her own, there rose a face whose grave rebuke stung her to the quick; whose pity and contempt showed her her own egotism in its true light, and swept over her with the force of a merited reproach.

"Why should I care?" she said at last, breaking that long spell of thought with an impatience that was almost anger. "I never have cared before. Others have blamed me, others have accused me of spoiling their lives, and it never gave me a disturbed hour. What is he but one among many; with a little more force of character perhaps—a little more earnestness of purpose—but that is all? Why should I care? He does not."

Despite herself she felt the colour spring to her face even as the unuttered thought sprang into her mind. Therein lay the sting of her life's first humiliation. One man had dared to resist her, had dared to speak cold, hard, unvarnished truth to her dainty ears.

To her temper, so imperious and arrogant, no slight could have been greater. It moved her to surprise at herself that she could think of Adrian Lyle without bitter wrath and indignation; that the fact of his absence to-day had been able to disturb her serenity and haunt her solitude.

Impetuously she turned away from the window at last, the flush still warm on her

check that had come with the humiliation of that thought—he does not care!

But would he always keep that serene indifference? Others had tried and failed when she had so willed. Why should this man be different? After all, he was but a man—of a nobler type, certainly, than most she had met; but she had read an ardent and imaginative nature in the flash and fire of the grand grey eyes; had fathomed the power of strong passions held in check by a strong nature, even under the perfect control and gentleness of that perfect manner.

For a moment her face grew warm; her eyes flashed like steel.

"If I could conquer him," she thought. "If I—could!"

It seemed a triumph worthy of all her efforts, stimulating even her languid energies. Would it be possible? She looked at herself and thought it would. But a vague sense of regret and impotence began to war with her usual self-confidence.

There was something base and cowardly in her resolve. She was not free, and he, if he ever cared, would not lightly forgive or extenuate treachery.

She seemed to see the blaze of wrath and scorn that would fill those speaking eyes; she seemed to see her petty vanities shrivel as before a scorching flame, when once he should read her purpose, and its petty end.

And yet its tempting allured and drew her on, and set the current of her thoughts to its turbulent flow. To be loved by him; to hold in her hands the misery of that grand and self-sufficient nature! For it would be only misery she would deal him—a cruel, incessant pain that should force him to remember her even against his will. The surest way to keep a man's memory was to make him unhappy. She had proved that again and again, and it seemed to her in this hour that no triumph would be so sweet as that which should wring from Adrian Lyle's lips the confession that, despite his strength and his reason, he loved the woman he now despised.

The task would not be easy, but therein lay its chief charm; something that would call forth her energies, her seductions, her thousand sorceries.

A little cruel smile crossed her lips; she caught its reflection in the glass on the opposite wall. "I am afraid I must be really wicked," she thought, as she looked back at that reflection. "My good moments are only vague regrets and vaguer

longings. What was it he said was to make me different? 'A great sorrow.' But a great sorrow can only spring from a great love; and where is there place or room for that—in a nature like mine!"

TEA TATTLE.

To the English the tea-table is typical of home. The mere mention of tea conjures up pictures of snug interiors, cosy firesides, familiar faces, and cheery chat. Its name is suggestive of all that is connected with sociability, and comfort, and ease. Moreover, it is a luxurious necessity—though that may sound paradoxical—to all classes. The charwoman, the washerwoman, the humblest cotter, each regards a cup of tea as the solace of a laborious life. To the middle classes "tea" is the meal for general family intercourse; whilst the ranks who form Society look forward to five o'clock—the hour dedicated to the consumption of this simple beverage—as the pleasantest and freest of the twenty-four.

But tea needs no new panegyric. It has been as highly eulogised as it has been severely denounced. Coffee, while it never has been and is never likely to become a national beverage, has also had its advocates and its opponents both before and since it took its place among the customary items of the domestic commissariat. To a certain extent, coffee has played a more important part in social life than tea; for the establishment of coffee-houses—the gossip-shops of our forefathers—is not to be passed over without due consideration.

And though coffee should claim priority of notice, inasmuch as it was known in this country some years earlier than tea, it is somehow to the latter that attention is first directed.

Tea, being a social beverage, the stimulant of fancy, and the promoter of pleasant gossip, suggests lighter thoughts than the mere consideration of dietetic qualities or the superiority of one blend to another. In the fragrant steam of a cup of tea, visions will arise of Mistress Pepys in new silken gown, of gay courtiers and painted ladies, stiff-skirted dames of the early Georgian era, and our short-waisted grandmothers, all of whom did their best, if the poets are to be credited, to prove the truth of a certain French proverb regarding absentees.

Dr. Johnson, in an essay on tea published in the "Literary Magazine," is of opinion

that it is unsuited to the lower classes, to whom, in its earlier days, it was totally unknown; it having been, as everybody knows, essentially a luxury, even so late as our great-grandmothers' days, when "company" tea was a guinea, and "family" tea not less than eight shillings a pound. The worthy doctor gives 1666 as the date of its introduction, it being, according to his account, brought by Earl Ossory and Earl Arlington from Holland, in which country their ladies learnt to brew it. But this is incorrect. The beverage was known in London as early as 1615, when it is mentioned in a letter written by Mr. Wickham, who calls it "chaw."

Pepys chronicles having sent for a cup of tea in 1660, "a China drink, whereof I have never before drunk;" and the advertisement column of the "Mercurius Politicus" for September 30, 1658, contains the following announcement: "That excellent, and by all physicians highly approved China drink, called by the Chineans 'teha,' by other nations 'tay,' alias 'tee,' is sold at the Sultaness Head Coffee-house, in Sweeting's Rents, by the Royal Exchange, London." The founder of the house issued a broadsheet, still preserved in the British Museum, in praise of "the best of herbe, the Muses' friend."

"The quality is moderately hot," he says, "either for winter or summer. . . . The drink is declared to be most wholesome, preserving in perfect health until extreme old age. The particular virtues are these: It maketh the body active and lusty. It helpeth the headache, giddiness, and heaviness thereof. It removeth the obstructions of the spleen. It is very good against the stone and gravel. . . . It is good against lippitude distillations and cleareth the sight. It vanquisheth heavy dreams, laseth the brain, and strentheneth the memory. . . . And next the virtue and excellence of the leaf and drink is evident and manifest by the high esteem and use of it (of late years) by the physicians and knowing men in France, Italy, Holland, and other parts of Christendom; and in England it hath been sold in the leaf for six pounds, and sometimes for ten pounds the pound weight; and in respect of its former scarceness and dear-ness, it hath been only used as a regalia in high treatments and entertainments, and presents made thereof to princes and grantees till the year 1657." A year later, according to another publication, "Rugg's Diurnal," tea was sold in almost every

London street, and it had then become to be esteemed so highly that the East India Company offered two pounds for the acceptance of the King, whose Queen greatly helped to make "teha"-drinking fashionable, and gave many a royal testimonial to the dealers. Referring to some blend of the fascinating plant, to which the royal lady had been pleased to give the "puff preliminary," Waller writes:

The best of herbs and best of queens we owe
To that bold nation which the way did shew
To the fair region where the sun does rise.

Amongst those who could afford to indulge in the new drink, the practice rapidly grew to excess, until in the time of Marie Thérèse, we find the Court physician attributing the increase of new diseases to the debility of constitution induced by constant tea-drinking. In 1678, its use had become so popular among the wealthy that it was freely indulged in after dinner, a custom much deplored in some quarters apparently, as Mr. Henry Saville, in a letter to his Uncle Coventry, speaks disparagingly of some friends who have fallen into "the base unworthy Indian practice" of quaffing "teha" after dining. This custom speedily died out, however, more potent liquors being more to the taste of the fine old English gentleman. The opponents of the new fashion not only attacked it on the ground of its injurious properties, but railed against tea-drinking and tea parties generally as the promoters of many undesirable practices, carried on under the seemingly innocent pretext of mild conviviality. Scandal certainly seems to have been a too frequent adjunct of the Chinese drink; but it is open to discussion whether the fair ladies of other generations would not have made any assemblage an excuse for gossip. Perhaps the stimulating properties assigned to tea may have unduly excited the imagination, and thus encouraged a certain freedom of thought and looseness of tongue; though Dr. Johnson, an inveterate tea-drinker, whilst acknowledging it as an incentive to gossip, denies its stimulating effects. "Tea," he says, "neither exhilarates the heart nor stimulates the palate, it is commonly an entertainment merely nominal, a pretence for assembling to prattle, for interrupting business or diversifying idleness." On the other hand, the couplet,

Still, as their ebbing malice it supplies,
Some victim falls, some reputation dies,

decidedly favours the opinion put forth above. Whatever may have made scandal

an indispensable accompaniment of tea, it is to be feared that a great many ladies of past periods gave frequent opportunities to gossip-mongers; but when accurate information failed, the imagination unfortunately supplied the required flavour to the Pekoe or Congou brewed on the occasion. Young is most bitter in his denunciation of tea-drinking:

Tea! how I tremble at thy fatal stream!
As Lethe dreadful to the love of fame.
What devastations on thy banks are seen!
What shades of mighty names that once have been!
A hecatomb of characters supplies
Thy painted altars' daily sacrifice

Besides being denounced on hygienic and moral grounds, it was also thought baneful from an economical point of view; and, considering the cost of each cup, there was some reason in this objection to its frequent and indiscriminate use. The paterfamilias of the Carolean or Georgian periods must have heard with much more uneasiness of a forthcoming tea-party than the husband of to-day. The less frivolous women of those periods exclaimed against tea quite as much as the men, and in a ladies' paper, "The Female Spectator," it is indignantly stated that the tea-table "costs more to support than would maintain two children at nurse; it is utter destruction of all economy, the bane of good housewifery, and the source of idleness."

As late as Southey's time, however, a great many women had never even heard of it, for the poet relates a story of a country lady to whom a town friend had sent a pound of tea as a handsome present. This worthy dame forthwith specially invited her friends to taste the new stuff, and duly served up to them the boiled leaves with the accompaniment of salt and pepper! It is further recorded that tea did not speedily become popular in that village. Those who did indulge in it were considered wildly extravagant by the opponents of all new fashions; and, in "The World" of 1753, it is deplored that an otherwise model country Rector is not able to forbid the use of this luxury to his town-bred wife. "However," it proceeds to say, "they seldom offer it but to the best company, and less than a pound will last them a twelvemonth."

Somewhat earlier than this, Dr. Salmon, in his "Family Dictionary," strongly recommends "thee" as an excellent and healthy drink, though he avers that "English thee, which is only sloe-leaves, gathered in May whilst they are young,"

is preferable to "Indian thee." To come nearer to our own times, it will be found that, in spite of its universal use in enormous quantities, the prejudice against tea by no means died out. Cobbett vehemently abuses it in his "Cottage Economy." Tea, according to his view, is "a debaucher of youth and a maker of misery for old age," and fifteen bushels of malt are worth "seven hundred and thirty tea messes;" while immoderate tea-drinking is even now a favourite theme for medical writers; and quite recently a distinguished cleric, at a meeting held for the purpose of discussing the furtherance of practical cookery in elementary schools, stated that "inordinate tea-drinking creates a generation of nervous, discontented people, for ever complaining of the existing order of the universe, scolding their neighbours, and sighing after the impossible." This is a view which may or may not be accepted. The Australians are certainly not good examples of this theory, for they are energetic folk, good citizens, peaceful neighbours, and yet tea is drunk to an enormous extent in the colony, and even the bushmen carry a supply constantly with them. In Russia, it is also a great institution, among the upper classes especially, who make the brewing of tea a study. That used is the "caravan" tea, brought overland, and, consequently, much dearer and better than our importations. It is brewed in the native "samovar," an urn kept perpetually hot by live coals, and is drunk, not with milk and sugar, as in this and other countries, but with a judicious mixture of lemon, which adds in a considerable degree to its flavour.

Whatever may be the effects of tea-drinking—a question best settled by the doctors, if they could agree on the point—it is an indisputable fact that its consumption in this country annually increases; and though there be those who virulently denounce it as a household poison, undoubtedly the majority will be in its favour, and a complete revolution of men and manners will have to take place before the social and cheering cup is banished from our midst.

BONES.

WHAT becomes of the bones? Every paterfamilias will at once reply, "into the ash-pit, or to the rag and bone man," and every good housekeeper will at once refer

you to the peripatetic tradesman. Most of us, however, never think at all about the matter; the bones go somewhere or other out of sight, and there is an end of them.

But the man with the barrow or donkey cart does not buy or exchange them for the love of the thing; on the contrary, we have the best reason in the world for asserting that he buys for the love of money; in fact, to sell them again, and make something by the transaction. Sooner or later, it is evident that he will want to get rid of his collection, and the question is then, where is his market? The answer to that is very simple; he takes them to the manure works. Bones are manure, then? Yes, and a very good one, either just as they leave the house, or after undergoing a treatment presently to be described. There are few manures which answer better, especially on pasture lands, and thousands of tons are used every year for this purpose.

It may be said that everybody knows this. A good many people do, I grant it, in a general way, just as we know that it will be hot this summer, without knowing why. But a very great many, including not a few farmers, do not know or will not believe it, and will shake their heads incredulously with the wide-awake look which we all know to mean, "Tell that to the marines." To these I can only repeat the assertion and give proofs, practical and scientific, so as to suit both classes of inquirers. One thing at any rate is certain; bones are very extensively sold for manure. The trade is a large one, giving employment to thousands of hands, and a very great deal of capital. And here I may observe that it is not a trade to be entered into lightly; farmers are the buyers, they are not rich and they take long credit; it is not here a case of the nimble ninpence, but rather of the slow shilling, not to say half-crown.

After all, it is not surprising that there should be some incredulity, even yet, as to the value of bone as a manure. For the best of us it is a knowledge of comparatively recent date; one of the numerous triumphs of this century, and by no means the least. I have taken some trouble in studying the literature of the question, and can find nothing before 1828, in which year the Doncaster Agricultural Society resolved to inquire into the subject, evidently of recent origin, and to that end printed and sent out extensively a number of questions. Answers were received in great numbers, and were submitted to the Council, who

deliberated long over them, and finally issued a Report in the form of a pamphlet in 1834. From this it appears that bones seem to have been used on an average only about twenty years; only one reply going back beyond forty years. Colonel St. Leger was the first known to use them in 1775; another experiment was made in 1794, but progress was very slow, from the practice of laying them on unbroken and in very large quantities; and it was not till fifteen years ago that they attracted general attention. Naturally, the question would be little more than local for a considerable time. It is curious to see why it should be so, and how merely geographical considerations should have an extraordinary bearing on the point. Now we know that Doncaster is the centre of a large and important agricultural district, but at first sight there appears no particular reason why it should appear in the van of progress, rather than Gloucester, or Shrewsbury, or Hereford, or Durham, or Carlisle. Yet there must be some sufficient reason, and here it is. Doncaster is no great distance from Sheffield, towards which every market day would slowly crawl hundreds of carts laden with produce to be deposited there, and thence to return, not empty of course, but filled with everything that might be wanted on the farm, the chief of which would naturally be manure. Now Sheffield is the head-quarters of the cutlery trade, which annually uses up an enormous weight of bone for handles, the sawings, clippings, and refuse of which would be ever accumulating, be a great deal of nuisance, get thrown on the rubbish-heap and be carted away with the rest. Such was the actual state of affairs; the cutlers were only too glad to give it for the trouble of carting. This went on for an indefinite period, till some farmer, more wide-awake or more lucky than the rest, noticed that where the bone was laid, better crops were the result; he would talk it over with his neighbours, most of whom would laugh at him; an odd one or two would, however, try for themselves, would find his conclusions confirmed, and act upon them for the future. In course of time—nobody knows how long it took—these farmers would take all they could get for nothing, and then begin to ask specially for it. Thereupon the cutlers would begin to smell a rat, and ask for payment, which they would get, and then in course of time, bone would get to be an article known to be wanted, and consequently to have a certain commercial

value. This explains, then, how it is that the manurial value of bone was first acknowledged in Yorkshire, whilst unknown elsewhere. It need not surprise anyone that the question of value as manure would be hotly contested, and that sceptics would be many. At that time, farmers were much more conservative than now, and much less educated; newspapers and magazines devoted to their interests were hardly known and little read; information travelled very slowly, and the farmer's horizon extended no further than his market town; and "what was good enough for my father is good enough for me," was then the regular commonplace in the mouth of the agriculturist. There would be many—a large majority, in fact—who would consider spending money on bones to be tantamount to throwing it into the ditch.

But a little heaven leaveneth the whole lump, and there were, it is plain, a fair number of farmers who were disposed to try new-fangled things. The Report of the Doncaster Agricultural Society confirms on the whole the favourable opinions which had found more or less expression amongst intelligent agriculturists. Bones had proved to be of considerable value on dry sands, limestone, chalk, light loams, and peat; on grass, arable lands for fallow, for turnips, or any subsequent crop. As an appendix are added some "Practical Remarks on Bones as Manure, from 1827 to 1832," by the factor to Sir Evan M. Murray MacGregor, from which it appears that bones did not get into Perthshire till 1827, and were then laughed at till the crop appeared, when forty-five tons were ordered by farmers for the turnips of 1828.

The Doncaster Report attracted much attention in the agricultural world, as the first authoritative statement on the question, and produced, in 1836, a pamphlet on the "Use of Crushed Bones as Manure," by Cuthbert W. Johnson, who, writing from Great Totham, Essex, asserts that they are better than the best stable manure, that the consumption has steadily increased, and would be greater, but for the fact that farmers as a class would not believe them to be manure.

Writing after this long interval of time, and still every now and then meeting with people who are yet of the same mind, it is not difficult to realise that a great deal of pre-judice would have to be overcome before this new-fangled article could take the place to which it is justly entitled. A piece

of bone lying on a field does indeed look a most unpromising object in the way of manure; about as valuable, in fact, as a piece of wood. It looks as if it had not been altered for years. It does not crumble when we pick it up, but seems perfectly solid, just as we have always known it. We all know farm-yard manure and liquid manure, and have seen guano and powdery manures spread on land, and we think we can see that they may and will be of use to the future crop; but the idea of pieces of bone doing good does not commend itself at first to our intelligence. There seems to be no reason why a hard substance like this should possess valuable characteristics. We can only take in the assurance on trust, that, after the application of so much per acre, the crop was very superior to what had been produced before, and this, no doubt, was the way in which knowledge got spread.

Nowadays, there is no difficulty in explaining the matter. Any chemist can tell you why bones are a good and lasting manure. But, though a knowledge of this science is widely spread, yet even now farmers, as a rule, do not go in for science; and, forty or fifty years ago we may safely say that it was utterly unknown to them. In fact, the whole subject was practically unknown to the world till the famous Liebig, about 1840, devoted his attention to the Chemistry of Agriculture. Since that date great progress has been made, and no one can take up a paper devoted to the agricultural interest, without being at once impressed by the fact that farming, in the highest sense of the term, is a profoundly scientific business.

The value of bones arises from the fact that they contain a very large proportion of an element which is found more or less in all crops, and especially in the seeds of the cereals—this is phosphorus, combined with oxygen and lime to form phosphate of lime. This latter compound, then, whether in the shape of bone or of natural rock, is the source of phosphorus, which is, perhaps, better known to us as the substance of which the principal and practically the only use is in the manufacture of matches. It is that peculiar article which anybody who has attended lectures on chemistry must have seen—a dirty yellowish-brownish looking substance, which has always to be kept in water, and is only to be handled, and for a short time only, with wet fingers. With this article we have nothing to do directly; our interest lies in its compound—phosphate of lime.

This compound is widely distributed. It forms a small percentage of all fertile soils, and appears to be derived from the ancient unstratified rocks, which came into being nobody knows when. Sir Wm. Thomson will say some twenty million years ago, Mr. Crookes wants some millions of millions; but both agree that it is a long time ago. We will skip this period, and merely observe that this rock, in the course of ages, crumbled down and formed a portion of the mineral constituents of the soil. Plants grew, and took it up chiefly in the seeds; these seeds form a large portion of the food of animals, including man. The phosphate of lime is thus absorbed into the system, part is retained and stored up in the shape of bone, part is continually passing away in the excrements, and thus the round goes on for ever and ever. The phosphate of lime, then, voided by our cattle, we know is returned to the soil in the shape of farm-yard manure, and it is only carrying the principle a little further to return the same constituent in a much more concentrated form in the shape of bones.

Bones, in fact, contain some sixty per cent. of phosphates, the rest being made up of nitrogenous matters and a certain proportion of water. The nitrogenous matter is of itself a valuable manure, and on that account, raw bone, just as it comes from the animal, is frequently applied to the land. It lasts longer, as the saying is, which, translated scientifically, means that it decomposes more slowly, the nitrogenous substances preventing mechanically the influence of the air and the acids always present in the soil. It is a well-known saying that raw bones are a landlord's, and boiled bones a tenant's, manure; and it is commonly understood that while the latter are good for four years, the former will last eight years. And this brings us back to our original theme, "What becomes of the bones?" We have already seen that they find their way to the manure works, and we can now follow them in their progress to the fields.

Let us suppose that a bone-collector has finished his daily round, and has got enough to make it worth his while to get rid of it. He goes to the manure works, and finds half-a-dozen others like-minded with himself to convert their stock into cash. When his turn comes, his lot is turned over and inspected very thoroughly, for somehow or other, bones collected from house to house seem to

have a great attraction for pieces of old iron, old bricks, paving-stones, and other unconsidered trifles, which are very heavy, and yet perfectly valueless to the manure maker. Having passed this ordeal, the lot is weighed and promptly paid for in the usual way, for, as may be imagined, in this trade there is no question of monthly accounts; no, the terms are strictly "cash on delivery."

But while this has been going on, there come up three or four carts full to overflowing with raw bones from the butchers, all the heads of oxen being symmetrically packed on the top, teeth upwards, a ghastly sight to the uninitiated, but nothing when you are used to it; in fact, if we want never to see anything but what is nice, one's movements would be very much circumscribed. Yet even here, this unpleasant raw material shows us that a love of the beautiful, an æsthetic feeling, is not extinguished, but still exists in the bosom of the prosaic butcher, or why this studied attention to external appearance in the commonplace packing in a cart?

Another cart will have two or three still more ghastly objects projecting above the sides, namely, the carcasses of dead horses, which are brought here from the horse slaughterer's. We all know dimly that there is a trade so-called, but few people are aware what becomes of a horse when it has been sent to the knacker's. The flesh is cut off, boiled, converted thus into cat's-meat, and sent to London, that enormous market for all sorts of queer things. If people only knew the extent of this cat's-meat trade, they would be astonished. As to the bones, we see where they find their way to.

Suppose all the barrows, donkey and horse carts emptied of their contents, we can now follow the bones leisurely. They are all taken and thrown on the heap, already large, lying alongside the bone-mill. This is simply two rollers with sharp steel teeth revolving slowly by steam power, and fed by an endless band travelling in an inclined plane towards them. On this the small bones are thrown with a spade, the bigger ones by hand—shanks, thighs, heads, ribs—and everything finds its way to the space between the rollers, and there, as may easily be imagined, something has to give way, and needless to say in this case it is not the steel teeth. The bones thus roughly broken fall down into a wheelbarrow placed beneath, which when full is at once

wheeled up a plank to the top of the boiling-pan, into which it is emptied and brought back again to the mill, and so on till the pan is filled. Now let us see what is going to be done to the bones.

What does the careful housewife do with the bones, let us say with the remains of the piece of ribs which was finished to-day? She breaks them up, puts them in a pan with water and heats it; very soon some fat comes out, which is skimmed off; the pan is restored to the fire, and then the goodness, as it is called, comes out, and this, flavoured in all sorts of ways, serves as soup, or as a foundation for soup. This is exactly the process pursued in the bone works; only, instead of the ordinary kitchen pan, the boiling vessel is of enormous size, holding up to as much as ten tons, and, instead of the fire, the heat is applied in the form of high-pressure steam. Under the influence of this powerful agent, the fat soon appears; is run off by well-known appliances; and becomes a merchantable article known as bone grease, bone fat, or bone tallow, and is used for all the purposes to which tallow is devoted: soap-making, candle-making, or lubricating machinery. The steam is still kept on, and in the course of time the gelatine makes its appearance—the goodness, as it is called in the home circle. At the proper moment, dictated by appearance, this is run off into large iron tanks; a black, thick, viscous, strong-smelling substance, which is now known as glue size, or soft glue, and which, at various strengths or densities, is largely used by dyers, finishers, and calico printers in the preparation of textile fabrics, such as cotton prints, mole-skins, cords, fustians, velveteens, and so on. Boiled down still further to expel more water, and then sliced with a sharp knife and hung on string in a current of dry air, we arrive at the well-known “hard glue,” which everybody knows, and which, by-the-bye, is the only glue known to the world at large outside the special trades which use the “soft” article.

Now what remains in the pan? Nothing but bone, pure unadulterated phosphate of lime, with a small percentage of the phosphates of potash and magnesia. Nothing further is to be got out of it, everything has been utilised; it only needs to be further crushed, to meet the requirements of the market, into half-inch or quarter-inch bones, or still further, into what is known as bone meal, and then it is ready to be carried on to the field, to undergo

the alternations of heat and cold, of day and night, and to come under all those influences which are briefly comprehended in the term “weathering.” Under these circumstances the phosphate of lime is carried into the soil, is taken up by the crop, which in time finds its way to man and the lower animals, and the same process is repeated over and over again.

Bones, we may as well say, enter also more or less into the composition of many artificial manures, which are specially adapted for certain crops, and which are made by the trade according to the dictates of experience and science. One has only to look over the advertising columns of an agricultural paper, to find that the farmer can be supplied with special manures for wheat, oats, turnips, potatoes, and, in fact, any crop known in England. The same remark holds good for foreign crops, of which we need only mention sugar-beet, sugar-cane, cotton, and tobacco, for whose nourishment between one and two hundred thousand tons are annually shipped from British ports.

The business of the British Kingdom being, generally speaking, to receive raw material from all parts of the world, to work it up into a merchantable article, and then to return it to its place of origin, it need surprise no one to find that bones are no exception to the general rule. As a matter of fact, our imports for 1885 amounted to no fewer than sixty-four thousand three hundred and eighty-seven tons, of the value of three hundred and fifty-seven thousand eight hundred and fifty-one pounds. This is exclusive of bones applicable for manufacturing purposes, such as buttons, knife-handles, etc., of which the weight for 1885 was nine thousand four hundred and thirty-six tons, valued at seventy-nine thousand four hundred and ninety-six pounds.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

ORKNEY, SHETLAND, AND THE ISLES.

IN most maps of the British Isles the Shetlands occupy a corner to themselves, as if they were just tacked on to the Orkneys, but otherwise placed for convenience of reference; and perhaps this custom of the map-makers is a cause why people fail to realise how far distant the islands are from the nearest point of the Scottish mainland. A hundred miles or

so of stormy seas divide the extreme northern point of Scotland from the important archipelago which seems to bring the British Isles within speaking distance of the Arctic Circle. Not that the Shetlands are distinguished by Arctic severity of climate. The winters are generally mild and soft; snow rarely lingers on the hills; although when the Frost King once obtains the mastery over the softening influence of the Gulf Stream, he does not fail to show by his grip that he feels that here is a realm that should be his own, according to parallels of latitude.

Some ninety islands and islets stud the ocean in this archipelago, but of these only twenty-five are inhabited. There are desert islands by the score, and yet not desert in the sense of barrenness, for they are, many of them, green with rich, succulent herbage, and afford pasture for sheep and cattle, which are tended by shepherds and herdsmen of the ocean; amphibious beings who are as much at home in a stormy tideway as upon the quiet moorland pastures of the mainland of Heth.

Heth, or Zet, or Shetland, bears in its name the secret of the origin of its people. It is as much Norway as Scotland, and if it were ever Pict-land, as tradition indicates, the traces of its earlier inhabitants in the names and manners of the islands are few and far between. Something of an earlier civilisation, of a more primitive Christianity, is indeed revealed in the names of sundry islands, the Papa-Stour and others, which suggest the former influence of the Celtic Church, whose Papæ or abbots once probably ruled the isles with mild and paternal sway. Then came the fierce Northmen, with their simple and homely forms of rule and government, and the rude rites of the worship of Odin, which took the place of the religion and civilisation of the Picts. Still the missionaries of the Irish Church found their way among the heathen, and there are traces of the influence of the fathers of the Columban Church as late as the eleventh century. But the islanders clung strongly to their old faith, and they owed their conversion to Christianity rather to their attachment to their chiefs, whom they determined to follow even through such unknown and dangerous paths, than to any spiritual enlightenment.

The flood of Northern invasion passed from Shetland to the Orkneys, from the Orkneys to Caithness and Sutherland, and spread itself over the Hebrides and Western

Isles. Always it was strictly limited by the hills. Where the Northman's ships could float, there he was lord and master. But the gloomy passes of the mountains inspired him with awe and aversion, nor had the simple pastoral life and hard fare of the hills any charm for him. Now, as the Gael has no real love for the sea, nor for the life of fisherman and sailor, the two races managed to exist together, and in course of time became pretty well amalgamated, that is as far as the Western Isles are concerned, and the new-comers gradually became even more Gaelic than the Gaels themselves. This transformation did not, however, take place in the Shetlands or Orkneys, which had been pretty well cleared of their Celtic population in the first outburst of the Scandinavian flood.

Thus Shetland has everywhere traces of the Northern origin of its people. Its lands are measured, not by acres, rods, and poles, but by the merk, an area of indefinite extent, larger or smaller it seems, according to the original quality of the land, but roughly classified as sixpenny, ninepenny, and twelpenny land. The headman of the district was formerly known as the Foud, and his jurisdiction was called the Foudrie. The chief seat of the Foud was in Tingwall, and upon a small holm in the loch of Tingwall the assize for the islands was held. Not far distant was the Tarpeian Rock, from which criminals were hurled by the ready hands of the community at large. But when Shetland came under the dominion of the Scottish Kings, the Court and seat of jurisdiction were removed to Scalloway, where Patrick, Earl Stewart, built a strong castle, A.D. 1600, the great Tower of Scalloway, now a shapeless ruin.

At Scalloway nearly all the gentry of the island had their town houses, and met each year in an informal kind of Parliament, the "Thing" of the ancient jurisdiction. This Court or Parliament, which was at once judicial and legislative, was anciently composed of the udallers or landowners, all lands having formerly been held by free or udal tenure. But in 1470 Shetland was pledged to the Scottish Crown, and an era began known in the annals of the isles as the oppression of the Lords. Shetland was granted to Lord Robert Stuart, the natural son of James the Fifth, and his descendant James. The builder of the Tower of Scalloway made himself so hateful by his cruelties and oppression, that his execution, in the year 1614, for

alleged high treason, was hailed with universal joy.

The Shetlanders have always been distinguished for their strong attachment to their ancient religious observances. They clung to the worship of Odin, and ate horse-flesh in his honour long after the islands were nominally Christianised. The King of Norway, after his father's defeat and death at Stamford Bridge, remained five years in Shetland, and zealously laboured to put its ecclesiastical affairs in a satisfactory condition. In conjunction with the Archbishop of Bremen, the Metropolitan of the Isles, he established nine or more bishoprics, the holders of which had no more extensive jurisdiction than the present parish ministers of the Scottish Church. The Isles were then richer, perhaps, in flocks and herds than at present, for the sole right of trading with the isles, which the King assigned to the merchants of Bergen, was then deemed a valuable privilege, while the Archbishop of Bremen alone, in virtue of his office, was authorised to import three hundred and sixty hundredweight of wool from the isles.

As well as in wool, the islanders were very rich in butter and oil, which formed the circulating medium in which they paid scatt and wattles, the original taxes of the island. Feus, too, were, at a later period, paid in butter, and landmails or rents were paid in woodmail, which was a certain quantity of cloth, for the weaving of which the islanders had long been famous. In these transactions the islanders employed their own weights and measures. The merk was used instead of the pound, and was equivalent to a pound and a quarter or a pound and a half, and twenty-four merks made one lispund, which was the general unit for commercial transactions. The weighing-machine of the island was a primitive steelyard; in this case a wooden beam, thick at one end and tapering to the other, and supported by a cord called the snarl, the weight in merks and lispunds being marked with pegs along the beam.

The harvest of the sea, too, was ever bounteous; the neighbouring waters abound in fish, and the Shetlanders have always been bold and hardy fishermen. Lands were often held by a fishing tenure, and the customs and epochs of the fishing season were modified by the demands of the labour of the fields. During the summer, the fishermen in a body resorted to some suitable shore where there was

space to dry their nets, and salt and cure the fish that were caught, and here they set up their tents or booths and made a temporary fishing town. The one great holiday of the fishermen was Johnsmas, 24th of June (Old Style), which they made a point of spending ashore in mirth and jollity. At Lammas they struck their tents and made for home. But first they feasted and made merry again, at what was called the Fisherman's foy. There was a favourite toast repeated over and over again, or rather it might be called a prayer, that seems to embody the dual life of these hardy crofters and fishermen: "Lord! open the mouth of the grey fish, and hold thy hand aboon the corn!"

The folk-lore and superstitions of this tenacious race is worth collecting; for although the ancient beliefs are fast vanishing under modern influences, they have lingered longer than elsewhere. Not long since the cotter bewailed his cows, elfshot by fairy bolts, and refusing their milk to the pail. The neagle or water kelpie haunted the burns and streams, and was especially dangerous to millers, whom he would entice to a fatal ride in the guise of a beautiful sheltie, all ready bridled and saddled. The witches of Shetland were long a terror to those who voyaged that way, as they could raise storms and tempests, and would do it too from mere wantonness of mischief when a strange sail appeared in sight. A legacy from the witches was the wresting thread, spun from the wool of a black goat or sheep, with its nine knots—a talisman not unknown either on the Borders, as in the ballad of Willie's Ladye:

Oh, wha has loosed the nine witch locks
That were among that ladyes locks?

But the witch knot of to-day is employed for more beneficent purposes than the undoing of fair ladies. It is a sovereign remedy for sprains and hurts, accompanied by the muttered formula:

Set joint to joint,
Bone to bone,
And sinew to sinew.

A curious instance, too, of the survival of old practices occurs at Weesdale, where stands an old ruined chapel dedicated to Our Lady, still secretly frequented by the islanders, at any rate as lately as the middle of the present century. The practice was to cast in an offering of money before the deserted shrine, in order to secure success in some enterprise or expedition. A cannie elder of the kirk was reputed

to have been in the habit of collecting these offerings at various times and placing them in the parish poor-box; but none of the neighbouring population would have dared to touch such a sacred deposit. About this same church of Weesdale, too, occurs the familiar legend of the two sisters, who so far eased the labours of the masons, that these found every morning enough stone ready quarried and dressed for the work of the day.

Another strange survival was the faith of the people in the royal touch for the King's evil. Scrofulous complaints are unhappily frequent, while the advent of a royal personage at Shetland is necessarily a rare event. There may be a doubt, too, whether the mysterious gift is inherited by the present Royal Family, who have never claimed to exercise it. But crowns and half-crowns of the first Charles were current in the island within the last thirty or forty years, a touch from which was supposed to be thoroughly efficacious, and the process was well known as the "Cure by the coin."

The chief mainland of the isles bears the name of Pomona. Whether a fancy name bestowed by some chieftain or bishop, who had not lost his Latin, or with some derivation from the Norse, does not appear. Anyhow, the country is not adapted for orchards. The islands generally are bare of trees, although the tradition is that there were forests once that covered the bleak hill-sides, and trunks of trees are found among the peat mosses. But the chief mainland valley of Quarff is pleasing enough; a simple moorland valley, with pastures here and there, and sheltered nooks for houses, and opening upon a pleasant bay. With this morsel of continent, six islands go to make up the parish. Among these are Bressa, dark and gloomy, with its headlands, caves, and strangely-shaped rocks; and Noss, with its eastern headland called the Noop. The Noop of Noss is a great station for migrating birds, a half-way house to the breeding grounds on the solitary Arctic shores, and in the season of flight it is covered with birds of many different species, whose cries are described as resembling the most deafening of waterfalls. There is the Holm of Noss, too, a perpendicular rock with pasture for a dozen sheep, separated from the main island by a terrible chasm, deep, but so narrow that a flying bridge of ropes with a cradle attached is thrown across.

Separated from the mainland by a sound

full of islets and rocks, is the Island of Yell, full of relics of an ancient population, which was much more dense, it would seem, than at the present day. There are tumuli, ancient forts, and cemeteries, where traces of cremation may be found, with funeral urns and other relics. There is a reputed Roman camp, too, at Snawburgh, although no Roman antiquities appear to support the claim; and it would be something of a surprise to archaeologists to find traces of Roman occupation so far north. The ancient occupation of weaving cloth is still carried on in this island, and, with fishing, farming, and mason work, the Yellanders manage to live and thrive.

Beyond lies Unst, surrounded by roaring tides and terrible races, where even in moderate weather navigation is very dangerous. The island is dry and level for the most part; but on the western side rises the height of Valleyfield, sloping gently towards the Atlantic, and then breaking off in tremendous precipices. The hill is seven hundred feet high, and yet, in stormy weather, the spray from the wild Atlantic breakers sweeps over the top, and gives the herbage of the valley a distinct character. The hill breaks off to the north in the headland of Hermanness, called after some Norse hero, and this is the extreme north point of Great Britain. The island, though generally bleak and bare, affords pasturage to numbers of those small and hardy ponies that are known as Shelties, or Shetlanders.

Around the island of Unst is a continuous chain of round towers, known as Picts' houses. Each of these towers is within sight of another, and they are generally perched upon islets or headlands; and when upon the level ground they are protected by several concentric moats. There is little reason to doubt the traditional account of their origin. The men of Orkney and Shetland have no doubt, at all events, of the former existence of the Picts, or Pechts.

Stephenson, the engineer, relates how it was reported to him once by the islanders that they had caught a Pecht, and it seems that they seriously contemplated putting an end to him, "more majorum." The Pecht turned out to be an inoffensive civil engineer of antiquarian pursuits, but very small in stature and dark in complexion.

Another curious feature among the antiquities of the Shetlands generally is the great number of small chapels—reputed Roman Catholic—mostly in complete ruin. It seems more likely that these were origi-

nally the cells of the early Celtic cenobites, than that the Scandinavian population were ever so devoted to religious practices as to build all those chapels.

Compared with the distant Shetlands, the Orkney Isles seem quite homelike, with only a dozen miles of firth between them and the Isle of Britain, although that Pentland Firth is as stormy a morsel of sea as can be well imagined. In rough weather the rude Atlantic surges come sweeping through the strait with a force and fury quite terrific. The power of these waves, sweeping along over thousands of miles of wild ocean, and dashing against the rocky barrier of the isles, may be judged from the fact that, in 1862, during a severe storm, the sea swept over the cliffs of the Isle of Strom, two hundred feet in height, and washed over the island in torrents.

The Orkneys are hardly so thoroughly Norse as the Shetlands; the Celtic population probably was not so thoroughly cleared out of them, for they were conquered at a later period, and they have experienced a certain reflux of Gaelic influences from the mainland. But the islands are quite Norse enough; the language of old Norgê was spoken up to the middle of last century; and it has been superseded by English, and not by Gaelic. The islanders, indeed, speak English with a peculiar accent which varies with the various isles to which they belong; and they use the "thou" and "thee," like the natives of Yorkshire or Lancashire, or the people called Quakers.

From the date of the conquest of the Orcades by Harold Harfager, A.D. 876, down to the fifteenth century, Orkney was held by a long line of thirty Scandinavian Earls, mighty potentates in their way, great pirates and plunderers, and holding themselves even with the royalties of their day. The line ended in a female, who brought the proud title to her husband, the Earl of Strathairn. The Earldom was then by a curious arrangement made to descend to the children of Lord Strathairn, the St. Clairs:

Holding princely sway
O'er isle and islet, strait and bay.

The St. Clairs held their title at first under the King of Norway; but in 1468, the suzerainty of both Orkney and Shetland was transferred to the King of Scotland, or rather it was mortgaged to King James the Third, as security for his wife's portion, that wife being Margaret, Princess of Denmark. The portion was never paid in any other form, and the Scotch Kings and

their successors remained, and still remain, in possession. But it has been questioned whether what lawyers call the equity of redemption has ever been extinguished, so that if the original mortgage were tendered to the British Crown, there might be a case for restitution that would put the affair of Alsace and Lorraine altogether in the shade.

Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney, contains some interesting relics of the Northmen. Chief among these is the cathedral of Saint Magnus, a building containing many curious Romanesque features, which was founded by Ronald, Earl of Orkney, A.D. 1138, in memory of his uncle Magnus, who, after his death, was canonised for his piety and his beneficence towards the Church. This saint has a certain interest for Londoners, as several churches dedicated to the same saint existed in and about the City, the foundation of which is generally attributed to Danish colonists. The ruins of the Bishops' palace, too, are of considerable interest. Here the Kings of Norway have been entertained, and one of them—Haco—died within the walls, after his defeat at the battle of Largs. The Earls' palace, which closely adjoins the Bishops', is a much more modern building, having been built by Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, early in the seventeenth century.

The Sinclairs, it must be noted, had been induced to exchange the Earldom of Orkney for other lordships and possessions on the mainland, and the Earldom was then settled upon the Crown. It was granted by James the Fifth to his natural son, and from that time the Stewarts ruled in Orkney till, in the year 1736, Earl Morton sold out all his possessions in the islands to Sir Lawrence Dundas—afterwards ennobled as Earl of Zetland—and the Earls of Zetland are still the chief proprietors of the Orcades.

The history of the Hebrides or Western Isles is closely connected with the Orkneys and Shetland. The same Scandinavian invasion brought them under the dominion of the Norwegian Crown; but the nationality of Gaels and Scots proved too strong for the intrusive element, and in the thirteenth century the Western Isles became once more, nominally at least, a part of the Kingdom of Scotland. But the Lord of the Isles long kept up a semi-royal authority, often in direct antagonism to the King of Scotland.

The chief seat of the powerful Lord of the Isles was in green Islay, where an isle

within an isle forms a natural stronghold three acres in extent. Here rested the sacred stone on which each new Lord performed the ceremonies of his initiation, clad in a white robe, with a white rod in his hand, and a sword, each symbolical of his various attributes as chief ruler. Bishops and priests hallowed the ceremony, and a grand mass was celebrated on the occasion. Then followed a week or more of feasting and drinking, in which all the chiefs of the isles took part, and when the bards and musicians, who attended in crowds, were treated with lavish hospitality.

The last of the Lords died a prisoner and a monk in Paisley Abbey. But isolated in their strong castles, and rarely troubled with interference from the Crown, the island chiefs long kept up a rude independence. Such an one was Maclean of Duart, who is the subject of so many stories and legends, that it may be inferred that his personality made a strong impression upon the people of his time. Maclean allied himself with the Spaniards of the Armada, who had taken refuge in the ship "Florida," in Tobermory Bay, within his own dominions so to say, and he availed himself of the skilled artillerymen of the crew to knock about the castles of his enemies. Tradition credits him, too, with an amour with a beautiful Spanish lady, for whose sake he deserted his wife, a member of the powerful Campbell family. In revenge the wife blew up the "Florida"—there is no doubt as to the blowing up—and there may be a germ of fact in the rest of the story. Luckily most of the crew were away on an expedition with Maclean at the time. Lachlan cruelly revenged himself upon his wife by placing her upon an isolated rock in the Sound of Mull, to be swept away by the tide; and the rock is there to testify to this day. But the lady was rescued, like Bluebeard's wife, by her brothers; and the legend goes on to tell how Lachlan himself was subsequently slain in Edinburgh High-street by his wife's indignant kinsmen. Another account has it that he fell in battle with the Macdonalds, on the shore of Loch Grinneard, in Islay.

Anyhow, the chief was killed, and had a grand funeral, no doubt, and was carried in much state with galleys and banners to the sepulchre of his ancestors in old Iona.

As for Iona itself, the Isle of Columba and the cradle of Christianity in the west, volumes have been written of its history and associations, which can only be barely

alluded to here. Nor can we say much about the outer isles, Lewis, described as a peat turf set in the Atlantic, and Harris, part of the same island but belonging to a different county. Indeed, the way in which the Western Isles have been parcelled out among counties with which they have no connection, either morally or topographically, suggests that here was originally the policy of dividing and splitting up the fellowship of the isles that they might be more at the mercy of friends on the mainland.

And lastly we must not disregard the poet's adjuration:

But oh, o'er all, forget not Kilda's race,
On whose bleak rocks which brave the wasting tides,
Fair Nature's daughter virtue yet abides.

Most remote and lonely of all our dependencies, indeed, is St. Kilda, cut off by sixty miles of stormy sea from its nearest island neighbour. And so they exist, without luxuries, without post-offices, or newspapers, a simple, frugal race, who spin and weave, and capture the sea birds on the face of the stupendous cliffs, hanging by ropes over the most frightful precipices. Certain peculiar conditions attach to their lonely lives: first, a strange mortality among their infants, so that the population is actually decreasing, and children are looked upon as a precious and rare gift, although the race is distinguished for fecundity. Again, there is the boat cough, a species of influenza, which attacks all the natives of the isle whenever it is visited by strangers. But on the whole they are a strong and healthy race, and those who survive the strange malady of infancy, which carries off six out of seven newly-born infants, are rarely troubled with any of the ills of flesh.

CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH.

THE English language is forcible in its expletives. To those possessed of a ready flow of words, its vocabulary of vituperation would seem to be extensive. English, indeed, has not unfrequently been termed "the swearing language," though it may incidentally be remarked that we cannot exactly be said to enjoy a monopoly in this respect. The English of everyday use may possess these among many other manifest advantages, but it is impossible for the warmest supporter of his country's ways to deny that, in some respects, our

language is deficient. Not that, in the long run, it is found impossible by its aid to convey any desired meaning; but it would seem to be wanting in exact equivalents to certain of those concise and expressive little forms of common courtesy, which in foreign tongues convey so much, as it were, in a nutshell. True, it may be urged, that all languages suffer from similar deficiencies. There are English words for which no exact equivalent is to be met with in other languages. It is characteristic of the cosmopolitan nature of modern existence that, unwilling as foreigners are to admit the superiority of outside—the Greeks would have termed them barbarian—modes of thought, words of exotic origin find their way slowly into daily use.

Thus Gallic neighbours have of late been largely anglicising their social vocabulary. The agreeable English custom of afternoon tea is so firmly established in certain Parisian circles, that it is considered thoroughly "chic" in high life to "five o'clock" after a "tour" in the Bois on a "breack" or a "four-in-hand" (pronounced, it should be observed, "foorinon"), or after the exertion of a little game of lawn-tennis (known as "laven-tenese") at which the "toilettes" of the "misses," and the "shakehands" between the "gentlemen" in "redingotes" (a corruption of our "riding-coats"), will be duly described by the "reporter" of the *Figaro* or the *Gil Blas*.

At all this farrago of Anglo-French and Franco-English words (each without its respective equivalent) we may smile; but on our side of the Channel we are guilty of much the same amiable weakness, though Englishmen would appear to be a little more sensitive as to the correct pronunciation of foreign words, wherever used. Our good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon has only been kept abreast of modern progress by the process of thus introducing new words from foreign sources. Ours, it must be remembered, is the most modern of the European languages, unless that new monstrosity, "Volapuk," is to be reckoned as enjoying a recognised existence. Many words which are to all intents and purposes as John Bullish in their appearance as can be of purely foreign, and comparatively speaking, modern origin.

A very hasty reference to the late Archbishop Trench's curious little work on English words will suffice to show how the successive incidents of our history, political

and social, have introduced new phrases into our language. Sir Walter Scott's ingenious explanation of the influence of the Normans on the domestic language of the kitchen has often been brought forward: how the ox, fed by the Anglo-Saxon serf, was known when served at the table of his Norman lord as "beef;" how the pig, tended by the Saxon swineherd, was the "pork" of the hall board; the calf, when dressed, became "veal;" and sheep, Frenchified into "mutton;" and so, since the days of the living contemporaries of Scott's ideal *Ivanhoe*, our tongue has had slowly added to it new words and new phrases, which in due course of time have been acknowledged as "English, quite English."

Of late years the pleasant French salutation of parting friends, "au revoir," for which there exists no satisfactory English equivalent—"good-bye 'till I see you again," is very roundabout—has been gradually creeping into use among us. Already, something of its original affectation seems passing away. The phrase, indeed, conveys a meaning which, to those who give any thought to such matters, is much less abrupt than the sturdy "good-bye," for which many persons will be found to express an open distaste. In the greeting of "au revoir"—the contraction of the longer phrase, "au plaisir de vous revoir"—there is a delicately transitional character, which stands in marked contrast to the shorter and more decisive "adieu," with the tones of which is associated the painful idea of possible eternal, at least, earthly separation. In English we have no transitional greeting such as is to be found in every European language: the "auf wieder sehen," of the German, the "a riverderci," of the Italian, exactly answering to the French "au revoir," for which our Parisian neighbours have several variations in the more familiar "à tantôt," "à bientôt," and so forth.

It is typical of that downright nature of our British character, on which we are so fond of dwelling, that our language is deficient in these delicate distinctions; and it is, perhaps, some might say, a sign that our natural sturdiness is being enfeebled, that we are admitting into daily conversation such new-fangled ideas, or "neologisms," as the grammarians would term them. Doubtless it is this feeling which accounts for the accusations of affectation which have always been levelled at those who endeavour to encroach on the insular self-sufficiency of our mother-tongue.

Every reader of Macaulay will remember how savagely that literary "brave" scalped poor Horace Walpole for his many Frenchified notions. But it must be remembered that, without such men as Walpole and their influence, our life would be very prosaic and unrefined. We owe to the experience gained by our nobility in their travels, during the once obligatory "grand tour," much, if not most of the artistic culture which exists in our country. Our very creature comforts would be but poorly attended to had not our ancestors introduced from abroad not only many of the delicacies, but the very necessities of our everyday existence.

English life, like our language, far more than the life and language of the modern French or Italian, bears evidence of constant modifications introduced by influences brought to bear on us from abroad. As an instance, we have not yet positively fixed our dinner-hour, which varies most puzzlingly; and as for the succession of courses, and the very elements which compose that most important of all meals, a degree of uncertainty exists in various sections of society, such as is unknown on the Continent. In this direction, foreign influences cannot be said to have been happy, for they have sadly disturbed many, if not most, of the excellent traditions of a past, which on this point at least was settled in its views.

It is impossible to deny that in the expression of delicate social distinctions, our language is in points deficient. How appropriate for instance is the use, common to every foreign tongue, of the endearing second person singular in addressing relatives or intimate friends. With us, "thou" and "thee" are now confined to the language of the conventional stage country-bumpkin, the poet, and the impressive commands of the decalogue. The Quaker's mode of address we, even they themselves, have come to regard as stiff. Yet what a singular deficiency it implies in our language—one not wanting in other respects in terms of endearment—that we should possess no middle course in the form with which we address our fathers and mothers, our sisters and brothers, our wives and children, or the stranger to whom we may have been introduced but a moment previously. At what period of our social history this came up it would be curious to determine, but the fact remains that ours is the one European language which is wanting in this graceful tribute to

affection and intimacy. It is only a further proof of the delicate shades of distinction attached to apparently simple forms of this nature, that the foreign use of "thou" may be made to mark quite as much the sense of superiority as of intimate equality. It is a relic doubtless of feudal tradition, if not indeed of the earlier classic times of slavery, that dependants abroad are usually addressed in the second person singular, a paternal form also adopted by elder persons in speaking to children. As for the German distinctions of the proper use of "thou," "you," and "they," such rules are regulated by a code of etiquette, the strictness of which would find but scant favour with our blunt English nature.

Before leaving a subject which admits of considerable extension, it is worthy of note that in another feature our language, whatever its literary power, shows a deficiency from a social point of view, which is unknown to the languages of the Continent. The universal use and adaptability of the French title of courtesy, "Madame," common also to Germans, and the Italian "Signora," with their respective diminutives, "Mademoiselle," "Fräulein," and "Signorina," mark a distinction, the absence of a conversational equivalent to which is in our country, socially speaking, most inconvenient. Without an exact knowledge of a person's name, the most polite of Englishmen is left without any elegant means of avoiding what borders on rudeness. In a foreign tongue it is possible to converse any length of time with a nameless "Madame," or even "Mam'zelle," or to refer to her existence with a third person without any awkwardness, while these simple forms of address will be further found to cover all difficulties in determining the often-vexed questions of rank and title. Our language is unquestionably rich in literary excellence, but, it must be admitted, it is somewhat deficient in the delicate amenities of social intercourse.

UNCLE BOB'S NIECE.

By LESLIE KEITH.

Author of "*The Chilcotes*," etc.

CHAPTER V.

THERE was no reason at all why Miss Walton should take a special interest in Tilly Burton. People who happen to live in the same hotel in London do not rush

into intimacies on that ground. They more usually avoid each other ostentatiously, and only discuss each other in the strict privacy of their own rooms.

But there were two reasons why she inclined to unbend to Tilly: and the strongest, if the basest, of these was the fact that her sister, Mrs. Thompson, had espoused a hearty dislike to the young girl from Scotland. Mrs. Thompson, averring that she was a married woman and a mother—as if she were announcing news, and therefore replete with experiences unplumbed by her sister—was sure that Tilly was a very inferior little person; and the more she inveighed against her dress, her manner, her appearance, her ways, her sayings, her doings, the more Miss Walton was urged to the defence. The other motive that influenced her was Tilly's beauty.

To say that women never admire other women better-looking than themselves is to utter a platitude that has been too credulously accepted as a truth, because it looks as if it ought to be one. Women are often very honest, and sometimes very enthusiastic, admirers of each other. Are the photographs of reigning queens bought by men only? Do the women flock to the Park to give their meed of praise to Beauty's bonnet, and not to the face under it? Or do they all crowd there, as some of them would have us believe, but to sneer and slight and disparage, and to cheapen her charms?

Miss Walton was, at least, not one of this baser sort. She was very passably good-looking herself, but she knew where she fell short, and Tilly was a thousand times prettier than she could ever have been or could ever hope, by any miracle, to be. Tilly was quite distractingly pretty, with that veiled and subtle suggestion she gave you of sweet country delights; quite distractingly pretty with her eyes of the speedwell's blue; her hair that reflected the sun's gold; and her dark brows that arched themselves with so naïve a wonder.

"Her hair is dyed, and she paints her eyebrows." This was Mrs. Thompson's verdict.

"She does it better than you, then, Maria," said Maria's sister, with smiling unamiability.

Maria, indeed, did not do it well at all. Nature would not own her for a fellow artist, it repudiated her best efforts; but it was on quite other grounds—on grounds

moral and ethical—that the lady objected to Tilly.

"If you will compromise yourself by talking to the girl, I beg you will wait till I go home, Honoria; you will not have long to wait, as I am going back to Yorkshire to-morrow. I, who have girls of my own to think of, can't afford to be mixed up with doubtful people."

"You are a married woman," said Honoria, repeating a statement that supported every one of Mrs. Thompson's arguments; "it wouldn't hurt you to talk to the child; no one in Yorkshire would be very likely to hear of it; whereas, if she turns out to be any of the dreadful things you suggest, what is to become of my poor, unprotected innocence?"

"You needn't endanger it; you have only to let her alone," said Maria, in obvious conclusion. "But you won't be guided," she added superfluously. "You will take your own way. You always did. I gave you up long ago. If you suffer for your imprudence, you will have no one to thank but yourself."

Thus abandoned, Honoria did, as most outcasts do, just what was expected of her. Since Maria had invited her to the hotel, however, on the plea of helping with the autumn shopping, and had paid her expenses, she had the decency to wait till Maria and the boxes containing the skirts, mantles, and tea gowns, which were to make herself and her girls the envy of other matrons and maids, were being whisked off in the train to Yorkshire.

It had been understood between the sisters that Honoria would, on the following day, remove to less expensive quarters, and the thought consoled Mrs. Thompson on her homeward way. Even Honoria could not compromise herself very deeply in twenty-four hours. But Honoria, after a strict examination of her purse, postponed her departure for some three days longer, and forthwith began her campaign.

Never was a siege more easy to conduct; never a citadel so facile of surrender as the fortress of Tilly's good-will; the chamber-maids were her friends from the first, and would have done anything for her; the waiters, even the one who troubled her with his too zealous services, had benignant looks for her; the busy manager threw an approving glance as she went by.

Miss Walton never quite knew how it was done. In the morning, she exchanged a word with Tilly as they both paused in

the corridor to scan the November sky and read its promise for the day. In the afternoon, she was drinking tea in Tilly's spacious sitting-room—Tilly in one red velvet lounge and she in another, with the cups between them. It seemed to savour of magic, but there was nothing eldritch about it; no witchery but in the charm of a very simple, natural, frank and free nature, unsophisticated enough to believe that almost everybody was nice, and certainly everybody just what he or she seemed to be.

Even Mr. Behrens. How was it that their talk had come round to him?

"Do you know him?" asked Tilly, forgetting that London is not so limited as Lilliesmuir.

"No," said Miss Walton, "not at all." There was in the "not at all" a faint emphasis that might mean "and I don't want to know him at all."

"He seems rather lonely," said Tilly, feeling called on to defend her acquaintance with him, though she hardly knew why. "I suppose that is why he likes to be with my uncle. And I thought you might know him, because we didn't know him till we came here—never so much as heard of him before."

"Didn't you?" said Miss Walton diplomatically. "New acquaintances are sometimes very pleasant. I feel as if this were a sort of apology or excuse for my appearance; I am such a very new one myself."

"But I am very glad to see you," Tilly hastened to say, "and my uncle will be very glad too. It was only the other night, and again to-day when he went out with Mr. Behrens, that he was lamenting I hadn't a woman friend——"

"Did he think you would be lonely?" asked Miss Walton, filling up the pause.

Tilly laughed, but she blushed too.

"He wants me to get some new dresses and things"—she glanced deprecatingly at her gown, as if to plead for tolerance for it—"and I don't know where to go, though I daresay the cabmen, who seem to know everything, might know that too. But I've been so busy striving to improve my mind under Mr. Behrens's directions that I've had no time to attend to my body."

"I think I may safely undertake to be your guide in that department," said Miss Walton, "and my experience is at least very recent. My sister, who has just left me, came to town for nothing but to plunder the shops of the very latest fashions.

She has six girls—think of that!—six girls who want school-room frocks, and walking frocks, and nursery frocks, and dinner and evening party and visiting frocks, not to speak of hats, bonnets, mantles, and jackets to go with each respective garment. It sounds like a contract for an army, doesn't it?"

"Do they all dress alike?" asked Tilly, looking very much astonished.

"In pairs," Honoria laughed. "My sister loves method and symmetry above all things; she prefers it to individuality, and she does her best to correct the mistakes of Nature in not giving her three sets of twins. But if you trust to me, I promise to applaud your judgement in all things."

"Well," laughed Tilly, "there's only one of me, so I suppose I may please my own taste. I shouldn't like to have been twins!"

She very frankly accepted this offer of comradeship on her shopping expedition, and forthwith arranged it for the next day.

When Uncle Bob returned, he, too, quite acquiesced in the arrangement. It was just what he wanted—a woman-friend for Tilly. He had noticed Miss Walton—tall and dark, with a pair of bright enough dark eyes; a trifle lanky, but that was a matter of taste. Oh, oh! he knew her; he should consider, for his part, that she was quite topsheff.

"Topsheff, topsheff," Tilly murmured. "Pray what may that mean? We generally put the things we prize least on the topsheff to be out of the way—the cracked, and chipped, and damaged, and unlovely things. I won't have you regard my friend in that light, sir."

"I guess she's all right," laughed Uncle Bob. "I'll ask Behrens; he's a knowing chap; I daresay he can tell us something about her. I'm just going down for a bite of something to eat," he said. "I feel kind o' empty. Tea? No, bless you, my lass, none of your wersh stuff for me—a bit of something solid, just as a put off till dinner-time."

When Uncle Bob came back with that too exacting appetite of his soothed into momentary silence, he had comfortable tidings for Tilly. Behrens knew something of Miss Walton. Behrens, it would seem, made it his business to know something of everybody. Miss Walton's antecedents would bear every investigation. Daughter of a deceased solicitor, who had had an excellent reputation if a very modest

practice. Sister married to a squire, with a place in the North. Not much money, perhaps, but all fair and square, and above-board; and being thus vouched for, Miss Honoria Walton might be allowed to consider herself Tilly's friend.

"We're getting on, we're getting on, my lass," cried Uncle Bob, rubbing his hands together in his honest satisfaction. "It's little outside of a week since we cast anchor here, and here we are setting up to know folks already!"

"A society of two," said Tilly with demure gravity. "First, Mr. Behrens"—he would recognise the propriety of putting him first—"and now, Miss Walton. And there is also Mr. Nameless—we mustn't forget Mr. Nameless."

"And who may he be?"

"Uncle Bob! Uncle Bob!" she shook her bright head at him sadly, "how often must I jog your memory? Mr. Nameless is the banking young man whom you asked to—to cold shoulder with Mrs. Popham; and then"—she went on quickly, seeing a cloud beginning to gather on his brow at mention of the lady's name—"there are all my Temple cousins. There are sure to be at least six girls; I've made up my mind for that number; six girls, and Miss Walton and me—eight of us to balance Mr. Behrens, and Mr. Nameless, and you—that's a fair proportion, isn't it?"

"Too much woman!" growled Uncle Bob, making a wry face.

"Ungrateful man!" said Tilly, shaking her sunny head. "Go away to your Behrens, and leave me with my Miss Walton."

Where is the woman—the young, good-looking and cheerful woman—who does not love a day among the shops, the attractive, alluring shops of London? Not merely a gaze from without on the treasures within, though that is charm enough when nothing more may be had; but an inspection, an investigation, a ransacking of every department; a lingering at the counter where seductive laces and ribbons lie in wait to tempt; a tour through the labyrinths of the costume room; a trying-on of bewitching bonnets and hats; a selection of ravishing mantles; a matching of scraps; a contrasting of shades; a spending of a whole quarter's allowance in one glorious campaign?

If girls exist who do not love it—and they of Girton or Newnham may not—neither Honoria Walton nor Tilly Burton was of the number. Tilly had never

hitherto had very much money to spend; wandering Uncle Bob's presents had chiefly reflected the country he happened to be travelling in, and though skins and feathers, shells and corals, are charming in their way, they are, after all, only adjuncts to a toilet in our climate. Now that Uncle Bob was here in the flesh, and no longer represented by rare letters and specimens of native produce, she had more money than she quite knew what to do with; more money than Miss Walton and she could manage to spend, though they bought everything that heart of woman could desire. Tilly's wants, too, had expanded with the day. If there is one temptation which shopkeepers thoroughly understand, it is the lust of the eye.

Tilly's modest list of requirements grew and multiplied with the minutes, and not her wants alone, but the wants, it appeared, of half the population of Lilliesmuir.

"They must have a little taste of London too, poor bodies!" she said in explanation. "Why, I am the only travelled person among them. Cousin Spencer goes to Edinburgh in May for the General Assembly, and Lisbeth packs for a week before, with all the parish looking on and assisting with advice. London—why, London is the end of the earth. The rustic mind has hardly followed Uncle Bob any further; it has lost him here—Uncle Bob, who has been round and round the world!"

So she bought gowns, and shawls, and ribbons, tokens from the far country to show that Tilly's heart yet yearned over Lilliesmuir—that she still remembered it in absence.

The shopkeeper who first opened a restaurant in the middle of his chairs and tables, his cottons, linens, silks, and "soft goods," was a very astute person. Tired nature can only tolerate a certain amount of shopping after all; the moment comes when the pangs of hunger will no longer be denied. Our grandmothers, doubtless, went home with many commissions unfulfilled, because of that need of something to eat, to which we must all sooner or later yield.

Something to eat comes to the shopper now, it meets her senses of sight and smell; it obtrudes itself gently on her notice wherever she may penetrate; it steals invitingly into the millinery section, and sends its wandering reminders even up to the region of boots.

Tilly and her new friend had lunched

comfortably, and were fortified to recommence the campaign, and now in another quarter of the big Babylon they were ending the day, the great field-day, with tea, soothed by a virtuous conviction that every duty had been fulfilled. The women and the girls, and even the men of Lilies-muir, had been remembered; the minister and 'Lisbeth had not been forgotten; and between Tilly's cup and Honoria's there lay a parcel containing a dozen pairs of gloves, which were discovered to be Miss Walton's size, and not Tilly's at all. Would Miss Walton mind wearing them? Tilly took sizes—she held up a small slim hand in corroboration of the fact, and these were half a size too big; Miss Walton was so much taller.

Miss Walton did not mind having a whole dozen of new gloves at once, instead of a single pair which was all she usually allowed herself, and they were just the shades she loved, and just the exact number of buttons she preferred. How odd!

How very odd, indeed! Perhaps it was odd, too, that the girls should grow confidential as they rested and chatted, and sipped their tea and counted their parcels; and that Tilly's heart, softened by remembrances of home, of familiar faces looking in vain for hers there, of voices heard no more except in dreams, should talk of the past.

"I always knew it must be past some-day," she said, "and it looks already a long way off. My father and mother died when I was quite small, before I could remember either of them, and then Uncle Bob took me to be his. But he was not rich then; he had his fortune to make, and while he was making it he left me with a cousin."

"And you lived with this cousin till lately?"

"Till a month or two ago. He isn't my cousin, but my father's cousin. He is a minister, and he is old; and his sermons are old; and his housekeeper 'Lisbeth is old. She is 'crabbed age,' indeed, but we got on pretty well all the same."

"Until your uncle came?"

"Until Uncle Bob came, and then we went away, and here we are, and everything has fallen out just as Uncle Bob always declared it would. He is rich, and we are in London together; everything has gone as he planned, except——"

"Except what?"

"Except that we were immediately to have gathered a large social circle about us, and as yet we have gathered only Mr. Paul Behrens."

"And me," put in Miss Walton.

"And you," amended Tilly.

"Did you expect to do that, while you were in a hotel?" asked Miss Walton, marvelling inwardly at the simplicity of this design.

"How is it usually done?" asked Tilly, Scotch fashion, meeting one question with another.

"Well," said her companion dubiously, "I suppose people coming from the country bring introductions, or else they know people already to start with, and get to know more through them in course of time. Don't you know anyone here?"

Tilly hesitated a moment, and then she gravely said "No one." Mrs. Popham's infidelity could not be overlooked or condoned. Mrs. Popham was no longer an acquaintance, and as for a young man whose name you do not even know, how could you include him among your friends?

"No one," she repeated, "not any one; so you see this part of Uncle Bob's programme remains unfulfilled."

"I see," said Miss Walton, glancing at the pretty face opposite hers with something between wonder and compassion struggling in her mind. Was there ever such a pair of innocent babes as this old uncle and young niece? Maria was all wrong, of course; they were utterly, ridiculously respectable; their guilelessness was even smile-compelling, but yet, if they acquired their acquaintances in the haphazard fashion with which they had acquired this Behrens—with which they had even accepted herself—might not the result be as compromising as Maria had prophesied it would be?

"It isn't so difficult to gather a set of acquaintances," she said, clothing her thought in presentable garments; "it will never be difficult for you to make friends."

"Tell me how it is done," said Tilly. "I haven't ordered all my beautiful new frocks to waste them on Mr. Behrens."

"And on me."

"Well, then," she laughed, "and on you. Tell me how to conquer; tell me how to succeed!"